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ABSTRACT

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labor (SFL) conducted a Workers' Education for Skills Training, or WEST Program, to upgrade its membership's basic literacy skills. The purpose of the WEST Program was to develop, ensure access to, and build support for a workplace literacy program designed to meet the diverse needs of affiliates' members. Six Saskatchewan workplaces were targeted for pilot WEST Programs. During the early part of the project, promotional activities and materials, including posters, buttons, and workplace informational meetings designed to minimize the stigma attached to illiteracy were developed and tested. Thirteen workers, representing the six workplaces, were released from their jobs to participate in 14 days of intensive residential training. Upon completion of their first 11 days, these participants/course leaders received certification from the SFL to return to their workplaces to initiate programs. When their programs were running, they were brought back to the residential setting for an additional 3 days of training. Twelve programs, with from 3 to 16 participants, were implemented; 52 workers were registered. All participants wanted to improve their reading and writing skills, 46 also wanted to improve their mathematics skills, and 20 expressed a need for English-as-a-Second-Language education. (YLB)

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Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Workers' Education for Skills Training

W.E.S.T PILOT PROJECT
FINAL REPORT

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Date: June 28, 1991

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November of 1989 the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) began an assessment of the basic reading, writing and math skill needs of the membership of its affiliates. Our initial investigation, conducted through meetings and interviews with senior staff representatives, local executives and members from affiliated unions, revealed an overwhelming demand and support for a program designed to upgrade workers' basic literacy skills.

With the aim of finding a method for best meeting these needs a review of existing literacy programs was conducted. The results of this review led us to conclude that the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST program provided the most relevant and useful model for developing a program designed to meet the particular needs of the SFL's membership.

While BEST provided the most useful potential delivery model, certain modifications of the program would be required. In contrast to the Ontario Federation of Labour's large industrial membership, the majority of the SFL's members work in the service sector, or in resource extraction, with a large number of members employed in relatively small and/or geographically isolated workplaces. Furthermore Saskatchewan has particular English as a second language (ESL) needs not yet addressed by the Ontario Federation of Labour. English is not the first language of many aboriginal peoples, in particular for many aboriginal peoples living in Saskatchewan's northern communities. In order to operate effectively in Saskatchewan both the curriculum and delivery strategy of the BEST model would require modification.

To accomplish this task, the SFL embarked on the Workplace Skills Development Program Pilot Project with the support and financial assistance of the Secretary of State. At the suggestion of our first class of Course Leaders, and with the approval of the SFL's Executive, the name of the SFL's program was changed from the Workplace Skills Development Program to Workers' Education for Skills Training, or the WEST Program. It was agreed that the new name better expressed the philosophy and intent of the program, was much more "accessible", and provided a much more readily digestible anacronym than did its predecessor.

Six Saskatchewan workplaces were targeted for pilot WEST Programs. These workplaces and their respective SFL member unions were as follows:

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	- Grain Services Union
Wascana Centre Authority	- Saskatchewan Government Employees Union
Ipsco	- United Steel Workers of America
Royal University Hospital	- Service Employees International Union
Cameco's Key Lake Mine	- United Steel Workers of America
Imperial 400 Motel	- Retail Wholesale & Department Store Union

Thirteen workers, representing these six workplaces, were pulled from their jobs to participate in fourteen days of intensive residential training. Upon completion of their first eleven days, participants received certification from the SFL to go back to their workplaces to initiate programs. Once they had their classes up and running the new Course Leaders were brought back to the residential setting for an

additional three days of training.

Twelve programs, with the number of participants in each ranging from three to ten, were implemented: three full SEIU classes at the Royal University Hospital, one RWDSU class at the Imperial 400 Motel in Regina, one GSU class with a mobile construction crew (now based in Humboldt), one GSU class with a Wheat Pool construction/repair crew in Swift Current, one GSU class with a Wheat Pool repair crew in Yorkton, two USWA classes at IPSCO, two USWA classes at Cameco's Key Lake Mine, and one SGEU class at Wascana Centre Authority in Regina. Because of the relatively small size of the workplace and resulting small number of potential participants at Wascana Centre Authority, we also included a worker from the Department of Health in this class.

Including participants from other conveniently located union workplaces proved to be an invaluable model for delivering programs to workplaces where there are not enough potential participants to justify independent programs. However, we still need to develop strategies for delivering programs in small workplaces located in rural workplaces where there may not be enough union members to justify independent programs.

A possible strategy here is to further develop our contacts within the network of Regional Colleges, share the WEST model with these organizations, and run cooperative programs including participants from union and non-union workplaces. The class could be facilitated by a team of two cooperative Course Leaders, one from the union and one from the community. This cooperative approach proved to be extremely successful for the GSU Course Leaders with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Program in Swift Current. Although both of the Course Leaders involved here were members of the Grain Services Union, this team approach did prove a successful one. Where this is not possible, we hope that the Regional Colleges can simply be encouraged to borrow our model and deliver programs independently. This may prove to be an effective strategy for extending the benefits of the SFL's model to non-union workers, the unemployed, reserve populations, or wherever those concerned believe it might be of benefit.

Although the successes of those workplaces involved in the Pilot Project resulted in a great demand for WEST programs throughout the province, they also brought several developmental and structural programs in program delivery to the attention of the SFL.

With hindsight, we realize that a more rigourous, documented, academic evaluation of the effects of program implementation on both general awareness levels and participants' skill levels might better illustrate the importance of workplace literacy programming to both employers and to possible funding agencies. Accomplishing this exercise would, however, require surveying general awareness levels and skill levels both before and after program implementation. It is impossible to collect reliable data from workplaces where the program has already begun. The knowledge participants and other workers now possess about the WEST Programs, and the dimensions of the literacy issue in general, is bound to cloud their memory of their awareness and skill levels prior to hearing about the SFL's Program.

Our strategies and materials for promoting WEST programs in the targeted

workplaces appear to have proven successful. It might be hypothesized that the negotiations with employers, the cooperative union/management/SFL workplace information meetings and the "public relations" work done prior to program commencement contributed significantly to the successes of the WEST Program. Yet, we have no evidence or data to verify this hypothesis. All thirteen Course Leaders trained were able to implement WEST Programs in their respective workplaces - a one hundred percent success rate. Only fifty to sixty percent of instructors trained by the OFL are able to implement BEST Programs in their workplaces. Our successes here might be attributed to our preparatory work or it might simply have been a statistical accident. Thirteen samples do not provide a large enough data base from which to draw any reliable conclusions. However, the successes of each of our Course Leaders are indisputable.

Over the course of the Pilot Project we made use of several strategies and different promotional materials in an attempt to address the social stigma attached to illiteracy head-on, and hopefully to reduce the shame and reticence potential participants might feel. Our strategies here appear to have been a success as we were able to attract enough workers to fill most of our classes, and to develop large waiting lists in a couple of workplaces. Unfortunately, this was not a universal phenomenon. We know that several individuals in one of our workplaces were in need of the opportunities WEST offers. These same individuals did not, however, initially feel comfortable enough to come forward and take part in the classes offered. In contrast, we do know that WEST has attracted many individuals who were, for many reasons, unwilling or unable to take part in other literacy programs.

Through the processes involved in training Course Leaders and implementing and delivering WEST programs the OFL's BEST model was substantially modified, both in content and strategy. Several new strategies for publicizing programs within workplaces were attempted, with some proving less successful than others. This process could be made much easier for the SFL, and for other groups embarking on such endeavours, with the production of a manual outlining strategies for implementing workplace programs under a variety of different circumstances.

The OFL's BEST Training Manual was rewritten to better represent and reflect the needs of the SFL's membership, yet there is still a great need to develop and incorporate new materials that better reflect Saskatchewan's particular cross-cultural concerns. Furthermore, the OFL's manual, and now our own manual, are essentially useless without having gone through the training process. Unfortunately this makes the model extremely difficult to transfer to a new audience and makes it dependent on the involvement of particular individuals - those individuals who have previously gone through the training course. If the SFL's Program is to be a success in the long term, and if others are to learn from and be able to make use of our experience, there is a real need to write down and formalize the processes involved in facilitating literacy through empowerment. As of yet there exists no such manual or guide that proves useful or practical for the North American audience. This necessitates two activities - production of a Facilitator's Manual, and testing of the SFL's new Course Leaders' Manual.

The SFL's Program is based on curriculum materials that are created and developed by its participants in the course of their learning. All of our Pilot Project Course Leaders experienced considerable difficulty in directing their

participants to take such an active approach to their own learning process. Most of us grew up within educational institutions where curriculum and learning directives were handed down - we were told what we would learn and how we would learn it. The transition to an actively participant centered, directed and controlled learning approach is not an easy one for any of the participants, including the Course Leader. We believe that a collection of workplace based adult curriculum materials, that were created and used by previous participants, could greatly ease this transition. Just being able to see that others in the same predicament were able to rise to the task seems to act as a great motivator and self-confidence builder.

The fact that the transition to an actively participant centered learning system is a difficult one did not, however, lead us to question the whole approach. Rather, we have simply recognized the need to try and make the transition an easier one. Although the transition is not an easy one, it is a pivotal one, for once the transition is made the results are amazing. Not only is the progress in learning new skills hastened, but possibly even more importantly, participants' self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning in general are greatly heightened.

The general consensus was one of success for all involved in the SFL's WEST Pilot Project. The very real accomplishments and victories of both the Course Leaders and the participants are irrefutable. Although the lack of more concrete and readily quantifiable data makes the model somewhat difficult to evaluate, the positive consequences are still readily apparent. The lack of quantifiable data has forced us to evaluate the successes of the WEST Program in more qualitative, more human, and possibly more meaningful terms - the difference the WEST Program has made, and continues to make, in the lives of all its participants.

2.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As stated in our Pilot Project Proposal, "the central goal of the SFL's Pilot Project was to develop and ensure long-term commitment and support for a provincial Workplace Skills Development Program designed to meet the particular needs of its member unions." Accomplishing this goal required that we first address two main obstacles not yet faced by the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST Program. These two main obstacles were: the relatively small size of the majority of our provincial workplaces and the geographical isolation of some of these same workplaces and many others.

Three main strategies for overcoming these obstacles were developed in the WEST Pilot Project, two of which were actually put into practice. These strategies and their respective practical examples are as follows:

1. Including participants from other conveniently located union workplaces. Where necessary participants may even be from different unions, however, the ideal is that they share a common union. This will at least provide some shared work experiences to provide an initial basis for developing common curriculum materials. The SGEU Program at the Wascana Centre Authority provides an example of this strategy.

2. Bringing participants who share a common work environment and/or employer into a central location. In this situation employers would also be asked to contribute some portion of travel time and mileage to cover the additional expenses incurred by potential participants. The GSU Program with the Swift Current Wheat Pool provided a successful model for this strategy.

3. Develop our contacts within the Regional College network, share the WEST model with these organizations, and run cooperative community based programs. Where this is not possible Regional Colleges may simply borrow our model and deliver community programs. By way of an example, this may be the required course of action in rural communities where no potential union Course Leaders are available.

All three of these strategies will be discussed further in upcoming chapters.

In addition, the SFL planned to develop and test different strategies and promotional materials designed to address the social stigma attached to illiteracy head-on, and hopefully to reduce the shame and reticence potential participants might feel in coming forward to take part in a WEST Program. Our strategies here appear to have been a success, as we were able to attract enough workers to fill most of our classes, and to develop large waiting lists in a couple of the targeted workplaces. All thirteen Course Leaders trained in the Pilot Project were able to implement WEST Programs in their respective workplaces - a one hundred percent success rate. This success rate appears to be a significant one because the initial success enjoyed by the SFL's Course Leaders is not an experience they share with their brothers and sisters in the OFL. Only fifty to sixty percent of instructors

trained by the OFL are able to implement BEST Programs in their workplaces. Our successes here may well be attributed to our preparatory work, or conversely, they may simply have been a statistical fluke. Because of the overwhelming response we received in almost all of our targeted workplaces we would tend to conclude the former, although we have no verifiable evidence on which to base this conclusion. Unfortunately, thirteen samples do not provide a large enough data base from which to draw statistically reliable conclusions. The details and specifics of these strategies and materials will be more fully discussed in upcoming chapters.

Accomplishing our goal of developing and ensuring long-term commitment to and support for the SFL's WEST Program necessitated three central tasks, or objectives. The three central tasks laid out for the SFL's Pilot Project were as follows:

1. Adapt the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST program to the particular needs of the membership of the SFL's affiliates.

2. Develop and test strategies for reducing the social stigma attached to the social problem of illiteracy in this country.

3. Develop and consolidate a partnership between the SFL's member unions, the provincial government, and the business community in order to provide an ongoing commitment to and long-term support for the SFL's WEST Program.

As has already been discussed, and will be further illustrated in subsequent chapters, the SFL successfully addressed these first two objectives. Unfortunately, however, we have been only partially successful in meeting our third and last objective.

The business community, in particular those organizations involved in the Pilot Project have been, and continue to be, extremely supportive of the WEST Program. Those business leaders involved in the Pilot Project have already begun to share the positive experiences they have enjoyed in WEST with other leaders of the business community. Several other major provincial employers have already expressed serious interest in the WEST Program. All of the SFL's affiliates, and a couple of unaffiliated labour organizations, have continued and strengthened their commitment to, and overwhelming support for, WEST. Unfortunately, the provincial government, with the notable exception of the Saskatchewan Department of Labour, has not shared in this enthusiastic support. We do, however, still hope that the results of this Pilot Project will provide the provincial government with a sound reason for reconsidering their previous decision.

3.0 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES & MATERIALS

As stated in our "Pilot Project Proposal," probably one of the greatest obstacles faced by an individual in the quest to upgrade their basic reading, writing, and math skills is dealing with and overcoming the social stigma attached to "illiteracy." By "social stigma" we mean the shame the victim of illiteracy feels as a result of treating the social problem of illiteracy as though it was somehow the consequence of individual failure or lack of ability.

Our experience in examining the potential need and support for basic skills upgrading programs in SFL workplaces taught us that illiteracy is not a problem of individual lack of ability or failure. When a possible twenty-five percent of the Canadian population lacks basic reading, writing, comprehension and numeracy skills illiteracy can no longer be viewed as the result of individual failure or lack of ability; rather, it is the consequence of the systemic failure to meet the needs of the individual.

By the time we enter kindergarten most of us have already completed the most difficult learning task of our entire lives: we have learned to speak our first language. Yet only a few years later we are told we do not know how to learn, or are unable to. We may have been told as children that we do not know how to learn, yet we went on to learn how to do our jobs, to function within our communities and to take care of our children. We know how to learn. If anything it takes more intelligence and ability to accomplish these other tasks without reading, writing and math skills than it does to accomplish them with strong basic skills. Reading, writing and math are just other useful skills that we can learn the same way we learned to do our jobs and take care of our families. Reading, writing and math are skills that can make our lives easier.

This was the message we tried to convey in our targeted workplaces. We tried to convey this message, or parts of it, in all our promotional materials and activities. Most importantly, it is the message we took into our information meetings in all our targeted workplaces. It is a message of the hope, choice and strength we can win through working together to improve our skills in reading, writing and math.

In order to begin to reduce the shame the individual victim of illiteracy feels we needed to bring this information into the workplace where not only the victims might hear it, but all workers and management. During the first four month phase of our Pilot Project we began to try and develop promotional materials designed to minimize the social stigma attached to illiteracy, and to emphasize hope and opportunity. The promotional materials themselves had to be understandable without a dependence on the written word. They had to be graphically based, attractive and designed for an adult audience.

The first item on our agenda was to design a poster to be used to advertise WEST before we went into a given workplace to conduct information meetings, and to continue to present a positive image for WEST once programs began. For this task we commissioned Armand Roy, a local Saskatchewan artist.

The first poster he came up with, a realistically styled depiction of reading

and writing skills as a worker's basic tools for life, did not really convey the message we were after. It did not readily offer the hope and opportunity we were after, and its basic colour format did not convey the power and strength we were looking for. His second attempt, based on an idea generated by SFL President, Barb Byers, and a slogan dreamed up by USWA representative, Mike Geravelis, was exactly what we were looking for. The "Lifetime of Opportunity" poster and logo rapidly became the main symbol for the WEST Program.

The poster succeeded in getting an initial awareness of the WEST Program out into our targeted workplaces, and in generating conversation and curiosity. We received many positive comments on the posters from workers in all the workplaces in which they were used. Both union and management personnel were pleased with the posters, and the messages they conveyed. As it turned out though, most of the poster's ability to generate conversation centered on its use of "Ayamihcike," the Cree word for writing. But, whatever the reason, the poster did the job it was meant to do. It generated important discussions and effectively introduced the WEST Program to targeted workplaces.

The rainbow theme of the poster was carried over to sweatshirts for the Course Leaders and others promoting the WEST Program in their workplaces, and to the information package and the general information brochure for the program. We believe the stylized rainbow is now the most visible and readily recognized symbol for the SFL's program.

At the Course Leaders' Training participants came up with the second graphic observable on one of our brochures and in some workplaces on small posters. The "UNION" graphic, with a pen holding workers aloft, was adapted at the training from an older SFL graphic.

"BEST of the WEST" was suggested by the Course Leaders as a slogan for promotional buttons. We produced these buttons in the bright green and yellow colours of the Federation so that they would be very visible throughout targeted workplaces. These buttons were handed out at workplace meetings, where those in attendance were asked to wear them and to talk to their co-workers about the SFL's literacy program. For a couple of weeks last fall you could not take ten steps at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon without seeing one.

These promotional tools, the "UNION" graphic and the "BEST of the WEST" buttons, were suggested by the Course Leaders because of the very positive images and messages they illustrated. "BEST of the WEST," as the slogan for our pilot graduating class of Course Leaders, also signified our "WESTern" adaptation of the OFL's original production and the positive consequences Course Leaders believed this would have for the workers of Saskatchewan. Both of these tools proved extremely effective in the targeted workplaces. Rather than the negative connotations generated by the social stigma attached to illiteracy, these tools, when combined with our workplace meetings, effectively conveyed very positive messages of "belonging" and "working together as a group to overcome".

Although all of our promotional materials greatly assisted us in getting the messages of the WEST program out into the targeted workplaces, probably the most important and effective tool we had was the workplace informational meetings. These meetings took approximately 1/2 hour to 1 hour of work time, yet seemed to

make an immeasurable difference in those workplaces where we were able to offer them.

Those who attended the workplace meetings were briefed on what the WEST Program would look like in their workplace, what it was designed to address, its confidentiality and freedom from testing, and the philosophy of WEST as outlined in the first few paragraphs of this chapter. We then showed the OFL's "BEST for US" video. These meetings and the video were probably our most important promotional tools for ensuring the success of the WEST Pilot Project. After hearing our presentation and watching the video many people came forward to sign up for the programs, to tell us stories of their educational experiences as children, to ask if we really believed they could learn, or to identify with the workers featured in the "BEST for US" video.

Unfortunately, due to difficulties associated with pulling people from their jobs and scheduling conflicts we were not able to do our presentation for all workers in all workplaces. The meetings and the video made the greatest impact on those workplaces where all workers and all management personnel were able to attend. Not only do these information meetings let people know that the program is available should they be interested in it, but they also make it much easier for those in need to come forward without shame. What makes these meetings and the video such effective tools is that we use them as tools to educate the <u>whole</u> workplace on the dimensions of the literacy issue. Our workplace meetings are much more than simply an opportunity for interested individuals to sign up.

4.0 W.E.S.T COURSE LEADERS

When the SFL began the WEST Pilot Project the only criteria we set out for volunteers seeking to be Course Leaders was good communication skills in English, and the desire to help others help themselves. Prospective Course Leaders were also told that they would have to be willing to contribute two hours of paid work time and two hours of their own time per week to lead their classes. Volunteers were further warned that their WEST classes would require that they complete some preparatory work on their own time. While these criteria remain the most important guidelines for selecting Course Leaders, we did come to realize that we needed better clarification of the qualities we were looking for in prospective volunteers, and exactly what would be expected of volunteers who made the final commitment to become WEST Course Leaders.

After much discussion and debate on what would be required of WEST Course Leaders we finally put together a list of the criteria for and role of Course Leaders. This list, as adapted from OFL materials, and as it is now presented in our "WEST Information Package" is as follows:

CRITERIA FOR COURSE LEADERS

1. Good communication skills in English. Course Leaders who speak additional languages can be especially suitable for delivering programs for workers who are learning English as a second language.

2. Respect for all co-workers - regardless of racial, religious, ethnic, gender, or cultural differences.

3. Respect for workers' skills and capabilities.

4. Interested in learning and helping others to learn.

5. Potential to develop a leadership style that allows for collective participation by group members.

6. Willingness to make a commitment to the WEST program for a minimum of 3 terms of approximately 12 weeks each (4 hours per week).

THE ROLE OF THE W.E.S.T. COURSE LEADER

The Course Leader will carry out the following tasks with assistance and cooperation from their local union, management, program participants and WEST Coordinator:

1. Recruitment.

2. Needs Survey and selection of Participants.

3. Identification of participants' learning needs and setting of goals for each term.

4. Collection/adaptation/creation of relevant curriculum materials.

5. Arranging physical resources and establishing positive climate for small group learning.

6. Planning and leadership of classes.

7. Evaluation of learning and of program.

8. Record keeping and reporting.

Initially we had also included "a commitment to the trade union movement and to trade union educational work" as a criteria for WEST Course Leaders. However, after the experience of our Pilot Course Leaders' Training we no longer believe this is a necessary criteria for recruiting volunteers. Although being a rank and file member of a trade union remains necessary, simply because we do not want existing authority relationships to interfere with the group dynamic of the class, we no longer believe a "commitment to the trade union movement" to be a necessary precondition for those wishing to attend the Course Leaders' Training. Indeed, such criteria may exclude some of our best potential volunteers.

Of the thirteen individuals who attended our Pilot Course Leaders' Training only four could say they had a previous "commitment to the trade union movement and to trade union educational work". Four other participants had had some prior involvement with their respective labour unions. However, the remaining five individuals had no previous experience with the labour movement at all. Furthermore, four of these five individuals were openly hostile to the labour movement prior to attending the WEST Training. Not only have all these individuals turned out to be extremely effective Course Leaders but they have also become active trade unionists. Two of the individuals who were hostile to the labour movement prior to their experience with WEST have now taken on leadership roles in their own trade unions. All those who attended our Pilot Training, with the exception of one previously active brother who was promoted to management, are now active and vocal members of their unions and the SFL.

As a result of this positive experience we have concluded that should volunteers not possess "a commitment to the trade union movement and to trade union educational work" before they attend the WEST Course Leaders' Training, they will most likely possess one by the time they complete it. Not only might these individuals provide us with critical insight into the possible shortcomings of our organizations and structures, but they may also be able to play key roles in revitalizing and rejuvenating the labour movement in Saskatchewan as a whole. Such individuals should not, therefore, be excluded from participating in the WEST Course Leaders' Training because they lack previous experience with the trade union movement or with trade union educational work. Rather they should be welcomed for the valuable future contributions they may make to the WEST Program and to the provincial labour movement.

4.1 Selection

The actual process for selecting participants for the pilot version of the WEST Course Leaders' Training varied slightly in each of the targeted workplaces.

We were able to take advantage of the information collected through the needs assessment process in selecting Course Leaders for the Grain Services Union (GSU) program at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (SWP). The Needs Assessment interviews collected here allowed us to identify a list of individuals whose skill levels were at least slightly above those they would be assisting, and who had indicated their possible interest and aptitude for Course Leading during their initial interview with SFL staff. From this list, and through a second interview with a GSU representative and a SWP management representative, the final four GSU/SWP Course Leaders were selected for the Pilot Project.

While the process used for Course Leader selection for the GSU program at the SWP proved extremely effective there was one drawback. It was a very time consuming process. Should the SFL hope to deliver WEST programs to all those needing and desiring them, there is no way we would be able to go through such a lengthy and time consuming process in each workplace. What we really needed was a method that combined the thoroughness of the GSU/SWP process with speed and efficiency. Furthermore, we realized our main goal for the WEST Program was to offer workers the opportunity of improving their reading, writing and math skills; therefore, our first priority need not be collecting statistics on existing skill levels.

At the Wascana Centre Authority in Regina potential Course Leaders were selected on the recommendation of SGEU, and with the approval of Centre management, from those who indicated potential interest during the needs assessment process. The process of selection here was not as thorough as it had been with the SWP. Management was not involved to the extent they probably should have been; nor were prospective candidates fully briefed on just what would be expected of them. As a result, only one of the three individuals selected showed up at the training.

Only three workers at Ipsco volunteered to be Course Leaders. Unfortunately, one of these individuals was unable to attend training because of a serious illness in his family. He is, however, still interested in attending any future SFL Course Leaders' Training sessions. None of the Course Leaders from the USWA program at Ipsco went through any sort of selection process because of unavoidable time constraints. Although we ended up with two very good Course Leaders, the selection process could have been dramatically improved with more time and more publicity for the reqruitment notices. Ipsco was unable to allow work time to hold information meetings prior to the training, so very few USWA members at Ipsco had any real knowledge of what involvement in the WEST Program entailed.

Three candidates were selected from a potential thirty applicants for the SEIU program at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon. Volunteers here responded to a reqruiting notice placed in their workplaces by their local union representatives. Respondents were then interviewed by a union selection committee. Because of scheduling and time constraints management representatives in this workplace were not available for consultation prior to the commencement of WEST

Training. Although we were still able to get three strong candidates for training, two of these Course Leaders have experienced considerable difficulty in getting their programs up and running, and in maintaining them. Both of these two Course Leaders had serious problems in trying to resolve scheduling and work load conflicts for both themselves and their participants. Many of these difficulties could have been avoided if we had had the time to better involve management in the pre-training organizational work. However, given the tight work schedules, heavy work loads and budget constraints faced by hospital workers and management alike, it is doubtful that we would ever be able to completely avoid potential problems in setting up programs for healthcare workers.

At Cameco's Key Lake Mine potential Course Leaders were recruited and selected by the USWA local executive in consultation with on-site management. Although this selection method worked extremely well as we could not have asked for better candidates, it could possibly be made better still for the future by including an interview with WEST Program staff. By these means volunteers could get clarification of what would be expected of them at the Training and for the future, and what to expect from the Training. There was no way to allow for this in the Pilot Project as Cameco only agreed to participate in the Pilot the day before Course Leaders' Training was to commence, therefore the local union was left to do all the pre-program work themselves with no on-site assistance from WEST Program staff. In this case we were just very glad to obtain management's approval prior to the start of training.

Our RWDSU Program at the Imperial 400 began as a picket line program. It was, therefore, impossible to obtain any input from management personnel. Our first RWDSU Course Leader here was selected by way of an interview with the WEST Program Coordinator, consultation with RWDSU staff and virtual acclaimation by the local union. Once the lock-out was over and a back-to-work agreement reached, we were able to obtain the approval of the management at the Imperial 400 Motel.

As discussed earlier, completing needs assessment interviews for all potential participants and Course Leaders alike is an extremely time consuming procedure. It is definitely too time consuming to use as a long-term Course Leader selection method. Should the time arise where we find it necessary to collect statistics on workers' skill levels before and after program implementation, much quicker methods of accomplishing this can be found. Our experiences with alternative methods for selecting Course Leaders has led us to formalize what we now believe to be the most practical and efficient method.

Future candidates for the WEST Course Leaders' Training will be selected through the complementary processes of volunteering, recommendation by the local union and management, and a final interview with WEST Program staff. Local union and management representatives from workplaces wishing to participate in the WEST Program will be asked to post notices outlining the necessary qualifications for, and the responsibilities that would be incurred by, those wishing to volunteer to be WEST Course Leaders. The SFL's outline of the criteria for, and the role of, WEST Course Leaders could provide the basis for this notice. Applicants should be asked to contact a selection committee consisting of at least one representative from the local union, and one from workplace management. From these initial volunteers the Selection Committee can make a list of those candidates they agree

upon. Those individuals recommended by the Selection Committee will be interviewed by WEST Program staff so that they will be fully aware of what to expect from the SFL's Training, and exactly what will be expected of them once they have completed Training. The final list of candidates arrived at here will be submitted back to the Selection Committee for final approval. By formalizing this process, the SFL hopes to continue the successes of its pilot.

We were extremely lucky in our selection of Course Leaders for the Pilot Project, especially considering the somewhat haphazard selection methods. In spite of the difficulties and time constraints we were able to find and train thirteen exceptional individuals as Course Leaders. All thirteen were able to overcome their own particular obstacles and begin WEST Programs. Although this was not an easy task, all thirteen agree it was an extremely worthwhile one. These thirteen volunteers will be the best long-term resource and investment of the SFL's WEST Pilot Project.

4.2 Training

Thirteen workers, representing the six targeted workplaces, were pulled from their jobs to participate in fourteen days of intensive residential training at the Prairie Christian Training Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. The names of these Course Leaders and their respective unions, workplaces and communities are as follows:

Andy Beattie	GSU	Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	Swift Current
Ron Kloschinsky	GSU	Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	Swift Current
Ralph Flegg	GSU	Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	* mobile crew
Loverne Thompson	GSU	Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	Yorkton
Bud Anaka	SGEU	Wascana Centre Authority	Regina
Alex Hamilton	USWA	IPSCO	Regina
Mike Singleton	USWA	IPSCO	Regina
Ken Dick	SEIU	Royal University Hospital	Saskatoon
Debbie Heagy	SEIU	Royal University Hospital	Saskatoon
Lien Quang	SEIU	Royal University Hospital	Saskatoon
John Desjarlais	USWA	Cameco	Key Lake Mine
Harold Johnson	USWA	Cameco	Key Lake Mine
Nicole From	RWDSU	Imperial 400 Motel	Regina

Although we were basing our Pilot Project Training on the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST Program, a few initial changes were made in the format before we commenced training. Rather than offering Stage I Training as a solid eleven days of residential training as the OFL does, the SFL elected to offer the training as a two part series. At a meeting of representatives from unions involved in the Pilot Project, the SFL President and the WEST Program Coordinator, it was agreed that breaking the first stage of training into two parts might be more amenable to our members. The dates scheduled for Stage I Training were as follows:

SESSION 1	September 9 - 14, 1990
SESSION 2	October 1 - 5, 1990

Breaking Stage 1 Training into two parts would present fewer difficulties in scheduling for participating workplaces, allow participants to return home to see their families, and allow participants to return to their workplaces to collect relevant materials for curriculum development.

Workshops on the following topics made up the first six day Session:

What is WEST?
Recognizing Literacy Needs
Trade Union Education
Literacy - Goals and Methods
Learning Another Language
Oral Communication
Reading & Writing
Reading and Writing Activities
Writing our Own History
Effective Programs

The second five day session of Stage 1 Training consisted of workshops on the following topics:

Program Administration
Numeracy
Getting Started as a Course Leader
Equality
Cross Cultural Awareness
Aboriginal First Language Literacy
Needs Assessment
Exercises in Course Leading
Planning, Evaluation & Learning as a Course Leader
Recruiting & Negotiations

A more in-depth discussion of what was involved in each of these workshops is offered in the Course Leaders' Training Syllabus included in our WEST Information Package. Several changes were made to the OFL's syllabus prior to training. These changes included adding sessions on Cross Cultural awareness and on Aborigianl First Language Literacy, and making minor changes in other workshops to better reflect the differences between the approach of the OFL and that of the SFL. Three staff representatives from the OFL's BEST Program attended our Stage I Training. They delivered the majority of the workshops involved in the Stage I Training and provided invaluable assistance in incorporating our changes. Upon their completion of Stage I all Course Leaders received certification from the SFL. A copy of the Training certificate is included as Appendix E.

Once Training was completed and the new SFL Course Leaders returned to their workplaces to begin their programs, WEST Program staff began to work on including the above changes in the WEST Manual. From the feedback we received from the Course Leaders further changes were, and continue to be, made to the Training Manual. We are still including Saskatchewan based materials; more practical materials to assist Course Leaders with their development of curriculum; provincially relevant materials on cross cultural awareness, racism, sexism and aboriginal literacy; and further practical guides to delivering ESL, basic literacy and numeracy. Our WEST Training Manual is already substantially different from that of BEST in order to reflect the suggestions and needs of our Pilot group of Course Leaders and program participants.

Although the response of the Course Leaders to the Pilot Project Training was overwhelmingly positive, they did suggest some important and relevant modifications to the BEST Program when they completed their evaluations of the Training, and in subsequent discussions. We tried to incorporate some of these suggestions in our own version of Stage II Training. Where the OFL holds a loose three day workshop that consists mainly of individual workers sharing their experiences and ideas, our Course Leaders were asking for more structure, and more practical ideas for curriculum development and increasing participant involvement.

The SFL's WEST Stage II Training was held March 5 - 7, 1991 at the Prairie Christian Training Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle. Stage II Training was facilitated by the WEST Program Coordinator and two BEST Regional Coordinators. The three day Stage II Training consisted of workshops on the following topics:

Where is WEST Going? - Program Evaluation
Sharing Strategies for Effective Programs
Program Content and Context
Methods for Participatory Education
Critical Literacy - WEST in a global context
Reading, Writing & Math - Class Activities
Recognizing Participants' Needs
Materials Development
Administration, Reporting & Negotiations
Planning, Evaluation and Learning as a Course Leader

Participants in the Stage II Training were very receptive to the agenda. The only changes suggested for the future were to include some of the materials from Stage II in the curriculum for Stage I Training, and that the training session should be longer.

All the Course Leaders presented oral reports on the progress of their respective programs. During the workshops participants worked on researching and developing new curriculum materials, and alternative approaches for facilitating more participant involvement in their programs. Role-plays were used to illustrate the various techniques of recruiting. Also, Course Leaders discussed what types of recruitment techniques (posters, pins, face-to-face contact, etc.) were the most effective in their workplaces. The importance of reporting regularly to union and management was discussed stressing strategies for meeting this objective without violating the confidentiality of the classes. The two OFL staff representatives in attendance were enthusiastically receptive to the training session and were anxious to return to the OFL with the new ideas.

Although participants in the Course Leaders' Training were continually asked for their verbal and written evaluation of the WEST Course Leaders' Training, they were also asked to complete a final written evaluation of their Pilot Training experience. For a copy of the questionnaire completed by participants refer to Appendix D. There were no negative responses. Our pilot group of Course Leaders could hardly have found any more "wonderful" things to say; for example:

"A very new perspective of how people can learn in natural patterns and help themselves in the process . . . the emphasis on group dynamics, cooperation, listening, democratic decision making and how these elements can work productively in attaining objectives or final goals."

"I have gained new friends, new confidence, and a new look at myself and others in general. When I first came I would have to say I didn't really know if I had it to teach other people. But now I believe most anybody could as long as you can relate to others, like people, and are willing to learn yourself. The atmosphere is not stressful at all and makes it easy to learn. When I am leading a program I will need patience, understanding, leadership, support, and participation from my group."

"Classrooms don't have to be set up as classrooms . . . No failure, no right or wrong way to learn . . . Does not hurt to make a mistake when you learn."

"I have gained a new understanding of Native issues, an understanding that anyone can learn to read and write in the right environment, . . . friendship."

"I have been given the opportunity to help my fellow workers to help each other. I will need the type of support I feel I saw demonstrated during this course."

"I have gained the confidence I will need to take the program into my workplace, and try my best to make it a success. Most likely, what will be the most valuable to me will be the ways of trying to draw people out, to make a more comfortable, relaxed atmosphere where an adult can learn and not feel self-conscious about his or her particular skill level."

"I gained new friends, an understanding of how group participation and relevant material really helps. I didn't know what to expect, I sort of figured we would get textbooks or workbooks. I guess I was wrong. Group participation helps to get new and fresh insights on all subjects discussed. I'll need patience and a dictionary."

"I gained friends, knowledge and a new understanding of myself. As well as how important it is not to judge a book by its cover because everyone has so much to offer in friendship, knowledge and encouragement. When I am leading a program I will need to remember I am there to learn as well, and that I can and will make mistakes and that's okay. Also to remember to ask for assistance and guidance from my co-Course Leaders, my Coordinator and my group."

5.0 TARGETED WORKPLACES

Six Saskatchewan workplaces were targeted for pilot WEST Programs. These workplaces and their respective SFL member unions are as follows:

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	-	Grain Services Union
Wascana Centre Authority	-	Saskatchewan Government Employees Union
Ipsco	-	United Steel Workers of America
Royal University Hospital	-	Service Employees International Union
Cameco's Key Lake Mine	-	United Steel Workers of America
Imperial 400 Motel	-	Retail Wholesale & Department Store Union

Twelve programs, with the number of participants in each ranging from three to ten, were implemented: three GSU classes with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, one SGEU class with Wascana Centre Authority in Regina, two USWA classes with Ipsco in Regina, three SEIU classes with Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon, two USWA classes with Cameco at the Key Lake Mine, and one RWDSU class at the Imperial 400 Motel in Regina.

The purpose of the SFL's WEST Pilot Project was to develop, ensure access to, and build support for a workplace literacy program designed to meet the diverse needs of our affiliates' members. The purpose of our Pilot Project was not to collect statistics on levels of literacy among unionized workers in the province. Our affiliates asked that we do something about workplace literacy, not study it. We did, however, realize that keeping some relevant statistical information on those individuals participating in WEST Programs might help others realize how serious and urgent a problem we are trying to deal with. We also realized that such information would probably strengthen our case for long-term funding.

In all the targeted workplaces, those individuals participating in WEST Programs represent only a fraction of those workers in need. For a variety of reasons we were limited in the number of workers we could include in our classes in all our pilot workplaces.

Because it was a pilot project, all of our corporate partners wanted to limit access to the classes in some way while they assessed the need, usefulness and cost, to their own organizations, of participating in the WEST Program. Furthermore, in all of our targeted workplaces many individuals, who came forward expressing their interest in and need for WEST, did not want to sign up for the first classes. Many workers wanted to wait and see if the program was going to work for others first. Some were still afraid that they might jeopardize their jobs, or be mocked by their co-workers, for participating in WEST. From our discussions with those that came forward we also believe that many more have not yet come forward at all.

Most of our WEST Pilot Projects also experienced some participant withdrawal. Some workers, most noticably at the Royal University Hospital, withdrew because of conflicts with scheduling and increased workloads. Very few workers withdrew because they simply lacked the commitment at this time; and for those that did, we still hope they will strengthen their resolve and return in the future. A couple of other individuals, expecting and wanting a more traditional

educational approach, also withdrew. We do, however, believe these individuals will return once they learn of the successes of their peers. We also hope to be able to prevent future withdrawals for this last reason with the creation of curriculum materials designed to ease the transition from traditional to participant centered, directed and controlled learning. Of course, we also had a couple of individuals withdraw from programs because of personality conflicts with their Course Leader or other program participants.

Overall, the WEST Pilot Project maintained a 76% participant retention rate. Only 24% of those who registered in the WEST Pilot Project have withdrawn from their programs. Furthermore, three of our twelve Pilot Programs have had no withdrawals at all. The vast majority of participants that withdrew were from the Royal University Hospital. It is difficult to estimate the degree to which we might be able to minimize withdrawals from hospital programs in the future because of the tight budgets and heavy workloads faced by workers and management personnel alike in this sector. We are, however, hopeful. Although two of the programs at Royal University Hospital had several participants withdraw, one of the programs only had one individual withdraw. What we now need to do is to take a closer look at why the one program managed such a high retention rate so that we might duplicate this particular success in the future.

There are at present fifty-two workers registered in WEST Pilot Projects. However, five of these individuals are waiting to welcome a new Course Leader since their original Course Leader was transferred and promoted to management. One additional worker is leaving his WEST class to move to Toronto. Another three of the fifty-two workers registered may not be returning to WEST in the fall. All three of these individuals are from the GSU/SWP Program in Swift Current, the first Program to actually begin offering classes. After having already completed twenty weeks of classes, these three men have met their original goals. They are, however, already considering new goals and contemplating a return to their class for the fall semester.

When we went into our first targeted workplace, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, we asked everyone present to volunteer to complete a needs assessment interview with WEST Program staff. Through the course of the Pilot Project we discovered that this exercise is somewhat unnecessary and potentially misleading. We say the interviews were misleading because workers who did not identify themselves as being in need of the Program in the initial interview with WEST staff, did so later with their co-workers, their workplace Course Leaders, once classes were ready to commence. We say the interviews were unnecessary because conducting needs assessments with all volunteers at this early date resulted in a the collection of a large amount of information that was not particularly relevant to, or needed in, the actual classes.

Where the interview process did prove useful was in convincing reluctant employers that WEST was actually needed in their workplaces. However, most of our corporate partners were already well aware of the need in their workplaces.

In the future we will not conduct needs assessment interviews until classes have actually begun. The interviews themselves will be conducted by the Course Leader, and not by the Program Coordinator. This provides a more comfortable and secure environment for the interviewee, and is more likely to lead to an honest and

productive assessment. The only exception to these future guidelines will be those workplaces where we have to convince employers of the need for WEST Programs.

All WEST Programs guarantee confidentiality to those participating. Information on the skill levels and goals of participants is restricted to the participants themselves, their Course Leader and the WEST Program Coordinator. Absolute confidentiality is a must if we truly want all workers to be able to feel free enough to come forward to take part in a program. Although both our union and management partners know that those workers attending programs in their workplaces are there to upgrade their reading, writing and math skills, they do not know the actual literacy levels of individual participants. Only in this manner can workers feel secure in the knowledge that they are in no way jeopardizing their jobs by taking part in WEST.

Because of the need to protect this confidentiality we cannot produce information on the skill levels of those workers registered in WEST Programs according to their respective workplaces. In several of our targeted workplaces the number of workers taking part in WEST is very small. If we were to identify the skill levels of participants in these workplaces it would not be difficult to connect skill levels with individuals. We have, therefore, elected to produce information on participants' skill levels only as a totality of all those workers now registered in WEST Programs. Should participants in individual Programs elect to come forward of their own accord as they feel confident in their newly acquired skills, that is a different matter and a decision they can make for themselves.

While every worker in WEST has identified their own needs and set their own goals, certain commonalities, in needs and the effect those needs have on the individual's life, are apparent. Although our methodology is not as readily quantifiable as test scores might be, we believe it does express skill levels in terms that are more meaningful for the participating individual and it tries to avoid depersonalizing the life consequences of their skill levels. We sincerely hope that in the future we will be able to do away with any and all methods of quantifying or pigeon-holing individuals for any reason. But for now, we realize that such models are a necessary evil if we are to demonstrate to all concerned the very real need for the SFL's WEST Program.

Since the focus of the SFL's WEST Program is on the individual worker's own definition and assessment of his or her particular skill level and needs, our statistical groupings are designed to facilitate and reflect these individual perceptions and the effect they have on the quality of workers' lives. These skill groupings, a refined version of the groupings originally presented in the final report on our "Program Feasability Study", are as follows:

A - those individuals experiencing great difficulty in coping with the literacy, numeracy and/or oral communication demands of their daily lives, inhibiting their ability to control the circumstances of their lives, and denying further opportunities or alternatives at work, home and in their communities. For many in this group their skill levels have already had a negative impact on their ability to do their present and/or past job.

B -- those individuals while coping to some extent with the present literacy, numeracy and/or oral communication demands of their daily lives, and who are meeting the immediate skill needs of their jobs are hindered in their access to further opportunities and are unprepared for changes in their immediate work environment. For many of these individuals their literacy skills do not extend to a point where they are able to understand new material and written information and are therefore limited in their ability to extend their existing knowledge base to new situations.

C - those individuals while experiencing no immediately obvious difficulties in coping with the literacy, numeracy and/or oral communication demands of their jobs and daily lives do recognize a specific area or areas they would like to improve (e.g., spelling, grammar, usage, technical language skills, problem solving skills, etc.) in order to enhance their job opportunities and educational alternatives.

The overwhelming majority of the fifty-two registered participants in our Pilot Project were men. Only nine, 17%, were women. This is not a surprise since the majority of the workforce in our targeted workplaces were men. However, even at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon only four of the registered twelve participants were women.

All the participants in our Pilot Project wanted to improve their reading and writing skills. Not one individual signed up for WEST solely for the purpose of improving their math skills. However, forty-six workers, 88%, wanted to improve their math skills in addition to their reading and writing skills. All six of those individuals who did not require any improvement in their numeracy skills were ESL (English as a second language) participants.

Twenty of our Pilot Project participants, 38.5%, expressed a need for ESL education. This means that in addition to the need to improve their reading and writing skills, these twenty individuals also wished to improve their oral communication skills in English. As they were identified by the participants themselves, the skill levels in each of their areas of need prior to beginning their WEST Programs were as follows:

3 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, A in Math, and A in ESL
2 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, A in Math, and B in ESL
6 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, and A in ESL
2 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, B in Math, and B in ESL
1 participant	-	A in Reading & Writing, C in Math, and B in ESL
4 participants	-	B in Reading & Writing, B in Math, and B in ESL
1 participant	-	B in Reading & Writing, B in Math, and C in ESL
1 participant	-	B in Reading & Writing, and B in ESL

Not all of those individuals wishing to improve their ESL oral communication skills were immigrants to Canada. For six of these individuals their first language and

national culture was Cree.

The thirty-two participants, 61.5%, for whom English was their first language identified themselves, prior to beginning WEST classes, at the following skill levels in the following possible areas of study:

5 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, A in Math
7 participants	-	A in Reading & Writing, B in Math
3 participants	-	B in Reading & Writing, A in Math
12 participants	-	B in Reading & Writing, B in Math
2 participants	-	B in Reading & Writing, C in Math
1 participant	-	C in Reading & Writing, B in Math
2 participants	-	C in Reading & Writing, C in Math

Although the level of formal education attained prior to entering WEST appeared to play no key role in determining participants' literacy levels, no one who completed grade 12 in Canada identified themselves as belonging to Group A. However, two workers who completed Grade 12 in Canada did identify themselves as belonging to Group B. One worker who completed Grade 12 in Canada identified herself as belonging to Group B in the areas of reading & writing and of math, and one worker identified himself as Group B in reading & Writing and Group C in math.

Only six, 11.5%, of the fifty-two Pilot Project participants identified themselves as having had less than a Grade 8 education, although seventeen participants, 32.7%, elected not to disclose their previous level of formal education at all.

Several of those individuals now participating in WEST Programs were, as children, told they were learning disabled, slow or incapable of learning. To date, none of these previous diagnosis is having any marked effect on any of these individuals' progress in WEST; rather all of these individuals are making exceptional progress.

The majority of WEST Pilot Project participants, forty-three, are between the age of twenty-five and forty-five, with only one worker under twenty-five and only eight workers over forty-five. Judging by our workplace meetings this appears to simply be a reflection of average workers' ages in these workplaces.

Negotiations for implementation of WEST Pilot Projects took a considerable length of time and several meetings with each corporate employer, with the notable exception of the Imperial 400 Motel in Regina. Although the WEST Program at the Imperial 400 will not actually move into the workplace and on to worktime until the fall, acquiring the agreement and cooperation of management in this workplace only took one actual meeting. We attribute the speed of these negotiations to the late date they were begun. Management here was able to contact management representatives from the other five workplaces, where WEST Programs had already been implemented. The successes of our originally targeted workplaces were probably the best reference we could have asked for.

We hope the successful completion of Pilot Projects in all our targeted workplaces will continue to promote and facilitate WEST's entrance into other organized workplaces around the province. At this time it certainly appears that the

longer an employer is involved in WEST, the greater and more enthusiastic is their support. It is our experiences and successes in these workplaces that will hopefully provide not only a model for the future of WEST, but also our best advertisement and reference list.

Everyone involved in the WEST Pilot Project, management and union representatives, Course Leaders and participants alike, were asked to complete evaluations of their workplace programs. Copies of the appropriate evaluation forms are included in Appendix G of this Report. Every attempt was made to make the evaluation process clear, practical and to the point. This was especially true for participants. We wanted participants to be able to complete their evaluation forms themselves with minimal assistance from their Course Leader or WEST Program staff. All class participants involved in the Pilot Project, including those who initially identified themselves as belonging to Group A in reading & writing, were able to complete the forms themselves.

Unfortunately, we do not, as of yet, have complete evaluations from all those involved in the WEST Pilot Project. Most of our union and corporate partners are embarking on evaluation processes of their own. We hope to receive copies of these evaluations once they are completed. Almost all management and union representatives agreed that their Programs had not been running long enough for us to be able to assess the full impact the Programs may have had on their workplaces and on those involved. The only exception to this was the Grain Services Union Program at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool where one of their Programs has already been in operation for twenty weeks. Management and union representatives here are now involved in their own evaluation process. All reports we have received from them to date are very positive and enthusiastic, but we have not, to date, received a copy of their final evaluation.

The results from the evaluations we have received are included in the following sub-chapters. All WEST Course Leaders and participants, with the exception of SGEU members at the Wascana Centre Authority, have returned completed evaluations to our office. Because this Program only just resumed operations on May 14, 1991, they have not, as of yet, had a chance to evaluate their Program. However, initial responses here are also very positive.

The general consensus was one of success for all involved in the SFL's WEST Pilot Project. The very real accomplishments and victories of Course Leaders and participants alike are irrefutable. Although the lack of more concrete and readily quantifiable data makes the model somewhat difficult to evaluate in traditional terms, the positive consequences are still readily apparent, as we will demonstrate in the following sub-chapters. We believe this lack of quantifiable data has forced us to evaluate the WEST Program in more qualitative, more human, and quite possibly more meaningful terms - the very real difference the WEST Program has made in the lives of its participants.

5.1 GSU & Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

The initial workplace meetings we conducted in our last project laid the groundwork for getting the GSU/SWP WEST Programs started. Bonnie Pearson and Donna Barclay, the union and management representatives from the GSU/SWP Employment Equity Committee, went back to the workplaces to assist the Course Leaders in announcing that WEST classes were ready to begin. They carried out another brief series of meetings in Yorkton and Swift Current to ensure potential participants that management and the union were both enthusiastically in support of the WEST Pilot and anxious to actually begin classes.

Because so much of the groundwork had already been done prior to the Course Leaders' Training, classes in Yorkton and Swift Current were up and running by November of 1990.

The GSU/SWP Program in Yorkton was the first to begin actually offering classes. Unfortunately, it was also the first to end when one of their participants was transferred to Regina, their Course Leader was promoted to management and also transferred, and the remaining workers were sent to the Ituna elevator. WEST Program staff went out to Ituna, where the remaining five participants were now based, to conduct an evaluation of the Yorkton Program. Although the Course Leader was only able to offer three weeks of classes, the six men in his class already believed they had benefitted from the Program. We did not expect such positive responses from participants who had only been in the Program for three weeks.

During the evaluation process, the Yorkton participants were given the option of writing their evaluations themselves or of having the WEST Program Coordinator complete them as interviews. All present elected to complete the forms themselves with the aid of group discussion on each of the questions.

When asked "What have you gained from this course?", the five participants all said they had already begun to see improvements in their skills. One of the participants said that although he had not gained "too much, as we had only three weeks, it was going very well." Participants also said they had gotten a chance to "learn things they did not learn in school and to remember a few things they did." Most importantly, they gained "the will to learn more and improve oneself, and more confidence that a person can upgrade oneself."

Participants agreed that the classes had been what they expected because they were "warned that their classes would not be like school". These five men found that the "informal atmosphere made it easy to relax and learn."

The format of the classes was what all found the most helpful about their WEST Program. Being able to learn right at work with the companionship and assistance of co-workers was the main reason participants found having the classes in the workplace the most helpful. The "classroom atmosphere" where you "did not feel out of place" also warranted the appreciation of the group. One of the participants also noted that he found "the writing workout" very helpful.

The only way the Yorkton participants believed the Course could be improved in the future was for it to have "more classes," and more actual hours of

class time each week. The additional suggestion that the SWP "allow more company time to work on the course, the same way that the agents get to work on courses that they are taking," was also noted by a couple participants.

Probably the most complete and unabridged evaluation we possess on any of the WEST Pilot Projects is our evaluation of the Swift Current GSU/SWP WEST Program. The Swift Current WEST Program began with eight participants. However, three of these participants withdrew after only a few classes when their Program moved to a four hour session on Friday mornings. These three individuals just found that they were not yet ready to make the sort of commitment needed at this time.

Participants decided that they could probably accomplish more with their allotted time if they moved the Program to the morning of their day off. They believed they would be fresher and much more receptive to their material and exercises if classes were not taking place at the close of a ten hour shift. This strategy worked very well for the five remaining participants, with no one minding giving up four hours during the morning of their day off. Rather than receiving two hours of work time during the Monday - Thursday period, participants and Course Leaders received two additional hours of pay per week for running their classes on their Friday off. Management also chipped in to cover fifty percent of the travel costs, including time and mileage, incurred by participants and Course Leaders in returning to the worksite on their days off.

Swift Current participants had a long list of things they believed they gained from their WEST Program. Two of the participants were able to meet their goals and return to the education system to obtain their GEDs, after only twenty weeks of classes. All participants noted dramatic improvements in their skills and their ability to use these skills in their work and their homes. One found that he had been able to refresh his memory on the subjects he had learned in school. Another believed that his most important gains had been in self-confidence, and in reading and writing. In talking to the Swift Current participants, and in putting together this evaluation of the Program, the WEST Program Coordinator could not help but note the rather amazing accomplishments of all the individuals involved in this Program. In comparing their original needs assessments with their final evaluations, the improvements in the skill levels for all participants were obvious and dramatic.

Participants here did not find the course to be what they expected. Participants found that they learned more than they expected they would, and that it was "much less stressful" and "much easier to learn" than they expected. Participants believed it was much easier and less stressful "because of fellow employees instructing and learning with fellow employees."

Two of the Swift Current participants found the math portions of the classes to be the most helpful because these parts directly assisted them in the performance of their jobs. Another found the reading and writing activities the most helpful because this was simply what he "wanted to learn right now." The other two participants said that they "found all parts very helpful because all of it was helping them meet their goals."

These participants had several suggestions on how they believed the Course

could be improved in the future. Their suggestions were: better meeting facilities, having materials and supplies on hand when needed, having the Course on 100% paid work time and expanding the Program to include participants from other areas of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and/or other workplaces. These five men had a very successful experience with the WEST Program and are now anxious to include others in their class.

The Swift Current WEST class was facilitated by a team of two cooperative Course Leaders. The Grain Services Union and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has found this team approach a very appropriate and successful one for their workplaces. They found this to be a particularly useful strategy because having a team of Course Leaders can potentially lessen the impact of transfers and ensure that at least one Course Leader may be able to continue if crews are sent to another area of the province.

The Swift Current Course Leaders were able to offer a considerable amount of information in their evaluations of their WEST Program. These Course Leaders found that "many of the participants came to the first class thinking it was going to be just like school. After they were assured that you went at your own pace and that there were no tests you could see the tension drop." At the first class the group was "subdued, quiet and almost waiting for the leaders to 'teach me something'." Noticable improvements were noted in the group dynamic after the first month of classes. "Some were still reluctant to speak out, yet others were very open and gave us plenty of ideas for material for future classes." After the first month "participants expressed themselves more openly, and were no longer afraid to participate in group activities." Now, after twenty weeks of operation, "every day you see something new in class. The excitement, confidence level, and participation among participants is improving all the time." Now "discussion can become heated, but everybody respects each other's opinion. Participants are no longer afraid to make mistakes and to laugh about it."

When asked what impact they believe the WEST Program has had on participants' skill levels the Swift Current Course Leaders responded that they "could definitely see an improvement in skill levels. Participants that hadn't written anything in years surprised themselves and others in the class with what they could write." Course Leaders noted that participants' "writing skills had improved and math skills had improved from 'refreshing' to new techniques for problem solving." In the area of self-confidence, Course Leaders said that all participants "showed vast improvement," and that "confidence levels seem to rise every class. Some participants that were very withdrawn at the first class are now participating much more frequently."

The two Swift Current Course Leaders found that "most everything we have done has worked quite well." One noted that "students going to the board with a problem and solving it themselves with the help of the group," was one of the most effective exercises they used. Although both said that they really had not "had anything that didn't work," one of our Course Leaders found that when he stood at the front of the class he found himself lecturing.

When asked if they believed they received adequate training in preparing to be WEST Course Leaders, both Course Leaders said "yes." One went on to add that he believed "the best experience is gained by leading a class," and that the "sharing

of experiences at the second stage training was particularly useful." The other Course Leader added that he "believed the training we received was very adequate. The instructors taught us with the same techniques they wanted us to use at our classes. This gave you hands-on experience as to how well they work. I definitely think it gives you a more relaxed learning atmosphere, which causes you to retain more of what you learned. I came from the training with a lot more confidence and a new attitude as to how fun learning can be."

Swift Current Course Leaders rated the support they received from all involved very highly. Especially high marks went to their union, the Grain Services Union and in particular to their representative, Bonnie Pearson; to head office management and in particular to Donna Barclay; and to the SFL, in particular the WEST Program Coordinator. Both Course Leaders said that they did not have "any problems with other workers bothering WEST participants. If anything other workers had been very supportive of the Program, although more participants would be nice."

Both Course Leaders believed that the WEST Program should be a main priority for the labour movement at this time. One responded that he believed "the program is very important for the labour movement. Some of our students could not even fill out a sick leave form, never mind reading and understanding a contract. Education in these areas is also part of WEST, which helps with these problems." The other Course Leader went on to add that it is "important for union members to improve their ability to express their needs and to speak out when problems arise. Any time people can acquire knowledge of their unions and their workplaces their workplaces will be better places to work in." These Course Leaders also felt that their WEST Program "has shown how unions and management can work together for the employees' benefit, as well as the company's benefit." The two WEST Course Leaders in Swift Current believed that they had "finally found a program designed to help the average worker," and that participating in WEST had "drastically changed their lives."

The third GSU/SWP Program in Humboldt did not actually begin offering classes until after the Stage II Course Leaders' Training. Immediately after the Stage I Course Leaders' Training the Humboldt Course Leader took a temporary leave from his workplace to attend another unrelated training. Although the Humboldt WEST Program has not been in operation for very long we have already received very positive evaluations from participants and management in this workplace.

The Humboldt Construction Crew foreman noted that the initial "response was excellent" and that "employees seem to be enthused." He believed the Humboldt Course Leader to be "enthusiastic and well motivated," and went on to add that the WEST Program here is enjoying "the total cooperation of union and management." He did however note that while the program "upset his schedule a bit at first, all have now adjusted accordingly." When asked if his organization would like to continue participating in the WEST Program the answer was "yes." He believed that "employee development is a concern for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and is encouraged when it is of benefit to the employee and to his workplace." The Humboldt Construction Crew Foreman said that he would recommend the WEST Program to other organizations because it was "a very useful tool, enabling employees to better themselves."

The five participants in the GSU/SWP Humboldt WEST Program also had very positive comments about their experience to date in the WEST Program. Participants believed they had gained new writing skills and "recalled a lot of material that had not been used in a long time, or forgotten." Participants have also found WEST very helpful in assisting them in improving their basic math and algebra skills. Participants here also said that they had already "gained more confidence in using the skills they already had."

Four of the five participants in the Humboldt Program found their classes to be pretty much what they had expected from the information they were given before class commenced. However, one participant said that the classes had not at all been what he had expected. He went on to add that he "at first thought it would be a waste of time. But it has been very informative."

Everyone participating in the class agreed that they had found all parts of the classes equally helpful, although three did go on to add that they had found the writing activities particularly helpful.

The only improvements Humboldt area participants could suggest for their Program was to have the whole class on paid company time, and to have even more time for actual classes.

Management at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool believes WEST has helped participants set goals and build self-confidence. One management representative responded that "this goal setting and the skill development it requires is bound to have a positive effect on self-esteem and confidence, and we expect that will be noticed in the workplace, if indeed it has not been already. Our Course Leaders have developed new skills and heightened self-esteem. Their pride in, and enthusiasm for the Program are obvious. This Program is seen as an opportunity for career development, and may have contributed to the promotion of one of them to a more senior position. The WEST Program has been a good opportunity for cooperation and joint problem-solving [between management and the union]. We believe that joint sponsorship has contributed substantially to the success of the Program, and that WEST's success will enhance cooperation and joint action in other areas."

The management representative from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool went on to add that "while we feel very good about the Program and the model it uses, at this point we are not able to evaluate the Program in terms of specific impact on workplace performance, or in terms of costs and benefits. We and the managers in the Divisions participating in this Pilot Program need more data on which to base an evaluation, and it is just too early to do that. At present we certainly recommend that other organizations consider the Program. Once we have completed a more specific evaluation of the Program, we will be in a much better position to decide if we can recommend the Program with confidence."

The SFL trusts that the independent evaluation of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool will only reinforce their already positive experience with the WEST Program.

5.2 SGEU &Wascana Centre Authority

We began the SGEU/Wascana Centre Authority WEST Program in Regina with a large workplace meeting. At this meeting all present were offered a brief description of the WEST Program, the "BEST for Us" video was screened, and workers were offered the opportunity of completing a needs assessment interview or just signing up. Initial response was minimal. Very few workers came forward to complete needs assessments or to sign up.

In comparing this meeting to other much more successful meetings in other workplaces we concluded that the size and structure of the initial meeting had a real impact on recruiting. One large meeting, encompassing approximately one hundred fifty workers, was our first contact with workers at the Wascana Centre. Also, management representatives here did not take as active a role in the actual meeting as they had in other workplaces where the meetings had proven more successful. For the future all our corporate partners will be encouraged to take a very active role in all the workplace meetings and meetings will be kept to as small a size as possible.

Although we did not get much of a response from the meeting, a few workers approached the WEST Program Coordinator outside of the workplace. One worker came up to the Program Coordinator in the parking lot after the meeting, another phoned her at home the evening after the meeting, and a couple other workers called the SFL's office asking for more information on the Program. Because we were getting a response of sorts it was decided to go out to the various worksites to speak again to workers about the opportunities WEST offers. Fifteen workers came forward to do needs assessment interviews during this second round of meetings.

After the Stage I Course Leaders' Training the SGEU Course Leader went back to his workplace to begin to try and implement classes. Unfortunately, only two of the fifteen individuals who had completed needs assessments were willing to commence classes at this time. The remaining thirteen had a variety of reasons for not wanting to participate in the first SGEU WEST class. The majority wanted to wait and see how the first class went. Several others were still afraid that participating in the Program would jeopardize their position in the workplace. Also, all the seasonal workers had already been laid off for the winter.

Because of the small number of participants we were able to include a participant from another SGEU workplace, the Department of Health. Including participants from other conveniently located union workplaces proved to be an invaluable tool for delivering future programs to workplaces where there are not enough potential participants to justify independent programs. The offices of the Department of Health were also located in Wascana Park, within walking distance of the class site. Including the worker from the Department of Health was further facilitated by compatible work schedules and common union membership.

Unfortunately, shortly after this class began operating the Wascana Centre Authority went on its winter snow removal schedule and the Course Leader went on a night shift. Had the class been able to get off to a more solid start we believe their scheduling difficulties could have been overcome. However, they did not get

that critical solid start for a foundation; so when the shift change came the class broke up. But, we did not give up because we did know that there was a real need for the program at the Wascana Centre.

The SGEU Course Leader left the Stage II Course Leaders' Training with a renewed sense of purpose and a bolstered self-confidence. Once Wascana Centre resumed its normal schedule, management provided us with an opportunity to try to get the class up and running again. We were allowed to make a brief presentation to the returning seasonal workers at their orientation meetings. At these meetings we presented an abridged version of our workplace information meeting and encouraged potential participants to sign up right away. Although response was by no means overwhelming, several SGEU members expressed renewed curiosity in the Program, and two new participants came forward to join the Program. Unfortunately, the two workers from the original Wascana Centre class have not rejoined the Program, but we are hopeful that they will return once they hear of the more recent successes.

With our two new participants now registered in WEST (the original two were never officially registered) and the participant from the Department of Health ready to resume, the SGEU/Wascana Centre Authority WEST Program officially reconvened May 14, 1991.

Although it is still a very small Program, this time it is a very solid one, and as such it will form a good foundation for building a larger Program in the future. Unfortunately the worker from the Department of Health will be leaving the Program to join his family in Ontario. However, even without the participation of this worker, a strong group dynamic is already building between the remaining two participants and their Course Leader. The two new participants and their Course Leader are already reporting marked improvements in self-confidence and skill levels. All say they are learning and accomplishing much more than they expected and are looking forward to continuing to work together. It will, however, still be some time before we have enough information to present a complete evaluation of this fledgling Program.

Thanks to the ongoing support and assistance of SGEU, in particular to Ralph Ermel, and of Wascana Centre Authority management, in particular to Irene Psula, but most especially thanks to the stubborn perseverance and rekindled optimism of their Course Leader, the SGEU/Wascana Centre Authority WEST Program is well on its way to success.

5.3 USWA & Ipsco

Because of complications associated with shutting down the operation of the plant, management at Ipsco could not allow us to hold workplace meetings. We did attempt workplace meetings immediately following or prior to shift changes but were able to attract only a few workers to these meetings.

For the Steel Division the only facility available for meetings was the Turvey Centre. Although it is very convenient to the workplace, workers do not have to pass through on their way home or to work. Therefore the only workers we were able to attract to these meetings were those that the Course Leaders were able to entice. Meetings in Pipe Division worked a little better as we were able to use their lunchroom, which many workers passed through on their way to and from work. However, few workers came in a half hour early for work, and fewer still stayed after their shifts, just to hear our presentation. Needless to say written meeting announcements were not particularly effective as recruiting devices or for attracting potential participants to our meetings. The only potential participants who attended the meetings were those who had heard about the Program from one of our two Course Leaders or from their immediate Supervisors.

We were able to hold informational meetings for both in-scope and out-of-scope supervisory personnel. The support gathered here proved to be an irreplacable tool for running classes under difficult circumstances.

Despite these obstacles we were still able to attract twelve committed participants to the USWA/Ipsco WEST Program. Since we did have two Course Leaders trained, and because twelve is too large a number for one program, the twelve participants were split into two classes of six. The USWA/Ipsco classes began operating on April 2, 1991, while workers were on a three week lay-off. Management volunteered to rearrange workers' shifts during this period so that those in the same class would also be on the same shift.

Once workers were called back to work, management announced they would allow the classes to operate on 100% paid work time for the full four hours per week. However, because there are still several shift conflicts several of the participants are still attending mainly on their own time. The scheduling of class times has also been very erratic because of these shift conflicts and difficulties associated with pulling some of the participants from their jobs for their classes. One of the classes has had an additional obstacle to face with the illness of their Course Leader.

Because of the commitment and perseverance of all involved, the USWA/Ipsco WEST Program is continuing to flourish. Although we do not yet have a complete evaluation of the Program we have received evaluations from six of the twelve participants. Management at Ipsco was engaged in a cost/benefit analysis of the WEST Program prior to the Program commencement date. We hope to receive a copy of the report on this analysis once it is completed as it should prove to be a valuable tool for evaluating the Programs and also, for encouraging other employers to participate.

When asked what they had gained from this Course, the six participants

from whom we have already received evaluations said they were already noticing a measurable improvement in their reading and writing skills, and in particular spelling skills.

Although we do not like to fall back on traditional methods, there is always considerable pressure on the Course Leader of a new program to teach in a traditional manner. Like the USWA/Ipsco Course Leaders, all of our Course Leaders faced pressure from their new participants to fall back on orthodox methods. The evaluations we received from the USWA/Ipsco participants demonstrated this phenomena.

Not all the USWA/Ipsco participants had the benefit of the workplace informational meetings to hear about the Program approach, and the ways in which WEST would differ from their previous experience in the educational system. Course Leaders here had already mentioned to the Program Coordinator that they were experiencing considerable pressure from their participants to teach them the rules of spelling, grammar, etc., and the "right" way of doing things.

One reason for the strength of the pressure on these Course Leaders would definitely be the fact that participants did not get to hear much about the approach of WEST prior to class commencement. However, though to a lesser degree, this is still a problem faced in all the classes.

When participants demand this traditional approach we have to rely to a large extent on existing materials from other organizations. Many of these materials do not necessarily try to facilitate a more active and contextual approach to learning. This makes the transition to an actively participant centered, directed and controlled approach all the more difficult. Developing our own curriculum materials designed to facilitate this transition, rather than hinder it, would provide a great deal of assistance for Course Leaders in this situation.

While there is no doubt that participants are benefitting from their Programs, the parts they say they are finding the most helpful are spelling, learning the basic rules, learning to write the correct way and practicing the ir multiplication tables. Our experience in other workplaces has taught us that people learn much quicker and more comfortably when they are learning through self-discovery, rather than trying to memorize rules right from the start. Course Leaders become trapped in a Catch-22. They know their participants will learn quicker and build up their self-confidence much faster by jumping right in and building on what they already know. At the same time they know that their participants lack the self-confidence to jump right in and not do it the "right" way.

Although there is no doubt that the USWA/Ipsco Program will eventually make the same transition other programs have, curriculum materials that could at once satisfy participants desire for the familiar approach and still facilitate their transition to the active contextual approach, could make this transition a much quicker and easier process.

The difficulties encountered here also demonstrated to us the importance of the workplace informational meetings. Participants not only get an idea of what to expect in WEST, but those workers not participating in WEST also get to hear about the Programs and the dimensions of the literacy issue. If it was not for our

experience here we probably would have underestimated the impact the SFL's presentation has on workplaces. Ipsco was the only workplace where we were unable to hold any sort of effective workplace meetings. It is also the only workplace where Program participants have faced any real amount of derisive or derogatory comments from their co-workers. Although this phenomena will no doubt also abate given time, our experience in other workplaces has shown us that it does not have to occur in the first place.

Like their GSU/SWP counterparts, the USWA/Ipsco Course Leaders found that the training they received in preparation for their Course Leading roles was more than adequate. One USWA/Ipsco Course Leader went on to add that "the final three days, where we were able to talk with others that had classes running helped the most."

The USWA/Ipsco Course Leaders also gave high marks to all those involved in their WEST Program. Particular thanks went out to their USWA Executive and staff, the SFL WEST Program staff, and to Ipsco management (especially Judy Anderson), although their thanks to management were qualified by a reference to the problems they encountered in shift scheduling.

5.4 SEIU & Royal University Hospital

With the assistance and cooperation of management and the union, and the hard work of our three SEIU/RUH Course Leaders we ran a series of workplace meetings to introduce the WEST Program to SEIU members at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon. Management at the Hospital let us conduct this series of departmental workplace meetings on paid work time allowing as many workers as possible to hear about the philosophy and structure of WEST Programs. The meetings were followed by a "blitz week." For a full week SEIU/RUH Course Leaders maintained an information desk in the hospital cafeteria, hoping to reach anyone who had missed the workplace meetings. The workplace meetings and "blitz week" were complemented by a large scale posting of the "Lifetime of Opportunity" posters and notices announcing the WEST Program in English, Chinese and Vietnamese. All those who came into contact with the Course Leaders or WEST Program Coordinator were also asked to wear the "Best of the WEST" buttons and talk about the programs in their departments. For most of the month of November 1990, you could not walk anywhere in the hospital without noticing the signs of WEST.

Interested workers were given several options for signing up for the WEST Program: they could fill out the back of the "Union" brochure and hand it in at a workplace meeting or deposit it in a locked box in the cafeteria, they could stay after the workplace meetings and have one of the Course Leaders or the Program Coordinator sign them up, or they could contact one of the Course Leaders or the Program Coordinator and arrange to meet privately. No one expressing interest in the WEST Program was asked to complete a needs assessment interview at this time.

The response to this promotion of the Program was overwhelming. Over fifty workers signed up for a maximum of thirty spaces. Prior to the SEIU/RUH workplace meetings, the structure and format of the needs assessment interview was changed to allow inexperienced interviewers to more readily administer it. Once everyone was given ample opportunity to sign up for the Programs, the Course Leaders contacted all those who had indicated their interest to set up appointments to complete the needs assessment interviews. From these interviews the Course Leaders, with the assistance of the WEST Program Coordinator, selected participants for their first Programs. With the benefit of hindsight, we realize that the first participants probably should have been selected strictly on the basis of compatible skill levels and shifts.

Although management here was willing to allow thirty workers to take part in the Pilot Project we decided to try and limit the number of participants in each Program to a maximum of eight. Eight still represented a large number of participants for one new program to handle. This is especially true for a workplace as large as the Royal University Hospital, where workers do not necessarily know one another. It is much easier for first-time Course Leaders to build up a group dynamic with a smaller number of participants. Again, with hindsight we realize that this probably contributed to the high withdrawal rates in two of the three Programs.

Had we not been carried away by the very positive reception the program

was getting, we might have had the foresight to further limit the size of these first classes and allow the Course Leaders to gradually build up their groups. It was, however, very difficult to turn potential participants away. Although they are now much smaller, the two Programs that experienced the initial high withdrawal rates are now solid, and running effectively. The remaining participants are very pleased with the progress they are making in their classes.

SEIU/RUH WEST classes went into operation the week of January 21, 1991. There are now, in total, twelve registered participants in the SEIU/RUH Program: two participants in one class, three in another, and seven in the last.

The two participants in the first class have found they have already improved their math, reading, writing and comprehension skills. One of the participants went on to add that he also gained "knowledge to help those more misfortunate than himself." While one worker said that the course was what he expected, the other said that he had expected the course to be offered "at a higher level". He went on to add that he wished there were separate programs for participants at different levels.

This sentiment was also expressed, though not quite as vehemently, by a participant in the larger class. Our experience here, when compared to that of our other targeted workplaces, led us to conclude that while multi-level programs do work very well for smaller workplaces, where everyone already knows one another, they do not work well in larger workplaces where most workers are not well acquainted with one another. Multi-level programs actually appear to be even more effective than their single-level counterparts for smaller workplaces, as workers here seem to benefit as much from assisting their co-workers as they do from independent work. This did not, however, hold true for a large workplace like the Royal University Hospital where participants that began at a relatively higher level felt they were being held back by the other participants.

Even after identifying what he saw as the major drawback of his class this participant went on to add that he had still found the course very helpful, particularly in the areas of "writing sentences using different words, the refreshing of math skills and reading out loud to put expression in reading." The other participant in this class found the general reading and writing exercises to be the most helpful activities.

Participants in the second SEIU/RUH Program said they were already noticing real improvements in their writing and math skills, and were looking forward to going on to meet all their goals in the near future. Participants found their classes much as they expected, although one participant added that it was really "a little more than I expected, because in a small class I get a lot more help with what I need to learn" as opposed to "a large class where there are more students with all different problems." Participants here liked "everything" about their class. One participant added that she particularly enjoyed "the fact that I can get the help I need and still be able to help other people with what they need." Participants here could suggest no improvements for their Program. They found it "just fine as it is."

Both the Course Leaders for these two Programs said they were already noticing real improvements in the skill and self-confidence levels of their participants. However, both added that the workloads participants faced when they

returned to their work stations after their classes was adding unnecessary obstacles to success. Both Course Leaders also believe that the WEST Program should be an immediate priority for the labour movement at this time because "it is helping workers build their confidence and strengthening their abilities to not be afraid and to speak out. The program helps workers understand that the union is on their side and encourages them so that they can get more involved with their unions."

Participants in the third SEIU/RUH WEST Program were able to list considerable gains. All participating noticed dramatic improvements in their reading, writing, comprehension and verbal communication skills, and in their self-confidence levels. One participant was able to write and pass his exam for journeyman's certification, after previously failing twice. He believed that the improvements in his reading and spelling skills, and in his self-confidence, directly contributed to his success. ESL participants found that they were now able to communicate more effectively with their co-workers and Supervisors. They also found they could communicate better in other areas of their lives as well, such as when ordering in a restaurant, buying and returning goods, and speaking on the telephone. Practising telephone dialogues was especially helpful for this group. Others found learning to use and understand large words, and learning how to write business and personal letters to be the most helpful of their class activities. Some found being able to discuss and understand important issues such as job safety, disability insurance, pensions, dental plans, group life insurance, payroll deductions, their union contract, the GST and the Gulf War, particularly noteworthy activities. Participants found activities centered on these topics, such as filling out relevant forms and writing letters and opinions, especially useful and interesting. Except for the one participant who believed dividing the Program into different levels could improve it, all the participants said they were greatly benefitting from the Program just the way it was. The only way they believed the Program could be improved in the future was for it to be able to enjoy greater support from hospital administration.

The Course Leader for this group of seven found that participants responded very positively after only the first class. "Everyone was a little nervous, but relaxed, after introductions and the realization of what the class was all about. They did, however, look to me as a teacher and this made me nervous. It took me the first class or two to make the participants understand that I was there not to teach, but to help them learn from each other and the materials available in their workplace, community and personal lives. After this we worked well together with enthusiasm and a willingness to tackle any topic, although some more successfully than others. Now, participants continue to enjoy and contribute to the Program. One of my participants still needs to be reminded that this class is not like school and that we do not have to be tested in order to measure progress. Attendance has been very good. Most wish to continue in the fall. . . . All of the participants have improved in the skills they set out to improve. . . . I sense an increase in everyone's self-confidence, including mine. All participants realized their skills were better than they initially thought, and each person has strong points which enable them to help other members." Two program participants here are already planning to apply for new positions.

"The most effective class exercises were discussions on understanding more about work issues and union contract issues. This branched off into exercises on spelling, reading and deciphering pamphlets. Many participants were unaware of

what their benefits entailed and how they could potentially effect our lives. We also did some brainstorming when participants were trying to fill out the evaluations. This was very helpful for them in elaborating on topics we worked on. The most effective facilitating technique for me was group discussion and encouraging group participation from all members. I tried to encourage members to evaluate the Program as we went along, trying to make them feel they could say what they wanted to and not be criticized or judged."

"The least effective exercises were those that were repetitive or easier for participants to do than I realized. Sometimes topics I thought would be a breeze turned out to take far longer and vice versa."

"The training for the WEST Program was very intense and, I thought, excellent. I do, however, feel that more time should be spent gathering and preparing lesson planning ideas for individual workplaces during the training sessions. Also, I found it difficult to find reading material at a level useful for all participants. In time we should compile our own list of reading materials that have been successfully used by other groups."

When asked to rate the support she received from all those involved in the WEST Program, this Course Leader gave top marks to the SFL's WEST Program staff and to her program participants. "This Program is theirs, and they have been supportive of me and of the hopeful continuation of the Program in the fall. They have been willing to evaluate honestly and helped by allowing their evaluations to be shown to administration. I am very thankful to know these people for they have shared as much of their knowledge with me as I have of mine with them. We have become friends and that is as important as any of the accomplishments any of us have achieved."

"I feel the WEST Program's Pilot Project was implemented into the labour movement at a crucial time. Working class people recognize the need to strengthen and develop new skills essential to compete with the dramatic changes in all sectors of Saskatchewan's economy. Workplaces are changing to keep up with new technology, making it more difficult to compete without adequate literacy skills. ESL Programs are especially beneficial in hospitals and other service oriented workplaces. Immigrant workers can learn so much about their jobs through such a program, making it as useful to the employer as the employee. It is vital for the SFL to continue to support and encourage participation in this Program. Labour initiated/worker run programs may be a way to begin to give control back to the working class."

All the Course Leaders added that the support they received from their SEIU local was crucial to the success of their Programs.

All SEIU/RUH participants and Course Leaders alike agreed that although they have enjoyed considerable support from their hospital administration at times, in particular from those "who understand what the Program is about," they would like to see hospital administration make the WEST Program a greater priority. Participants and Course Leaders believe this support is "crucial, especially in times of financial cutbacks and layoffs when staff morale is an issue that needs to be considered. The cost of the Program is minimal and it is obvious that it is essential and beneficial for all involved."

5.5 USWA & Cameco

The USWA workers at Cameco's Key Lake Mine were introduced to the WEST Program through the SFL's workplace informational meetings. Prior to the WEST Program Coordinator's arrival, the two Course Leaders covered the workplace in "Lifetime of Opportunity" posters and flyers announcing the upcoming meetings. A considerable amount of discussion on the WEST Program had already been generated by the activities of the Course Leaders before WEST staff went to the mine site.

Being unable to offer the meetings on paid work time did not present any problems in attracting large audiences at Key Lake. Because workers live at the workplace for seven full days every two weeks, they are not adverse to attending meetings even after putting in a twelve hour workday.

With the assistance, cooperation and active participation of on-site management and the local union Executive we held four workplace meetings: two for each seven day rotation, with one for the evening shift and one for the day shift. Interested individuals were given the option of staying after the meetings to complete a needs assessment interview or of filling out the back of the "Union" brochure and completing a needs assessment at a later date.

The response we received from the USWA workers at Cameco was the most overwhelming of all our workplaces, especially as a percentage of the total workforce. A total of forty-seven workers came forward wishing to participate in the WEST Program. All of these individuals volunteered to stay behind at the close of the meetings to complete needs assessment interviews.

The USWA/Cameco Program began offering classes the week of February 24, 1991. The two Course Leaders and many potential participants were initially disappointed when Cameco's management limited participation in the Pilot Project to four participants per weekly rotation. However, all concerned have since come to realize that starting the Pilot Projects with a small number of individuals is probably the wisest strategy for the long-term. Beginning the classes with only a few individuals gives participants the opportunity of building a solid base for possible future expansion.

Classes have only been in operation for a very short period of time, so we do not have a great deal of information on which to base an evaluation of the Program. Because workers at the Key Lake Mine work on a seven-days-in/seven-days-out basis they are only able to attend their classes every other week. However, both Course Leaders and participants alike are already reporting improvements in their skill and self-confidence levels. Both Course Leaders also ranked the support they have received from all concerned very highly.

One of our Course Leaders reported after his first class, that although participants were "very excited and anxious to continue," they were also "very shy and did not want to actively participate." After the first month of classes, he found that the "communication was a little better." Participants "were finally all talking and working together." Now he finds that there are "very few problems. They are all very helpful as they all now know how to help each other; and that they all have different gifts they bring to the class." Participants in this Program are

already "doing things they have never done before. All have brought their self-confidence levels up to new peaks. They are doing safety meetings, talking at union meetings and writing their own requests."

This Course Leader said that his most effective strategy for activity planning was simply "using the material participants are interested in and the material they bring to the classes." The least effective material he tried to use was video material that participants had expressed no previous interest in.

When asked for their perception of how WEST was working for USWA members at the Key Lake Mine, Cameco's management personnel said they wanted to give the Program more time to run before they began any real evaluation of its successes or failures. Once they believe the Program has been given enough time to build a solid foundation they will conduct a complete evaluation. At this time we hope to be able to produce a more in-depth evaluation of the USWA/Cameco WEST Program.

5.6 RWDSU & Imperial 400 Motel

The RWDSU Program for the workers at the Imperial 400 Motel in Regina began as a picket-line Program for the locked-out union members. It has been operating out of the Course Leader's home, for at least four hours per week, since the first week of January, 1991.

The WEST Program was first introduced to these RWDSU members in an informal workplace meeting right on the bus at the picket-line. Three participants immediately came forward to complete needs assessment interviews, and to sign up for the Program. One of their co-workers, a woman who had already been assisting her friends on an informal basis, volunteered to attend the Pilot Course Leaders' Training and become the Course Leader for the group.

Once workers were able to return to work and an agreement was reached with their employer, the Imperial 400, a meeting was scheduled with the Motel Manager to discuss the WEST Program. The WEST Program Coordinator, the RWDSU Course Leader and the RWDSU Staff Representative attended the meeting with the Imperial 400's Manager and Supervisory Personnel. Although the meeting only took approximately two hours, it was very successful and productive for all concerned. After consulting with senior head-office management, the manager of the motel contacted the WEST Program Coordinator and agreed to participate in the WEST Program.

We will probably be going into the workplace to offer workplace informational meetings in the late summer or early fall of 1991. By the end of September the RWDSU/Imperial 400 Program should begin offering workplace classes on 50% paid work time.

We were both surprised and pleased at the speed at which this Program will be moving into the workplace. We credit much of this success to the preparatory work of RWDSU staff and their WEST Course Leader, and to the excellent list of references we are now able to present to employers considering the WEST Program. The fact that management personnel at this workplace were quick to recognize the need for the Program obviously also played a paramount role in the speed and successful outcome of our negotiations. We were happy to add a sixth member to our list of corporate partners.

Although the Course has not yet moved into the workplace, it has already been a very successful and worthwhile experience for both the Course Leader and the three participants. All participants, including the Course Leader, have noticed dramatic increases in their self-confidence levels. This Program, together with the GSU/SWP Program in Swift Current, were recently featured in a twenty minute CBC-TV story on Workplace Literacy Programs.

All three participants report that their reading, writing, comprehension, math and verbal communications have already improved. Because they worked on improving their skills by discussing issues they were concerned with or curious about, and then creating their own activities centered on these issues, participants have also gained a knowledge that surpasses the mere acquisition of technical skills. Participants find they now have a much easier time understanding new written

material because they can draw on their existing base of knowledge. All of these participants, including the Course Leaders, have become extremely active and expressive writers. They are now very anxious to share their WEST Program with their co-workers at the Imperial 400.

6.0 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the WEST Program staff's curriculum development activities have centered on rewriting the OFL's BEST Manual to better reflect the needs of the membership of the SFL's affiliates and beginning to collect copies of some of the materials produced by Program participants. We hope to be able to reproduce many of these materials, and many others yet to be collected, so that they might be used by future WEST participants and other interested organizations and individuals.

In addition to including cross-cultural materials, designed to reflect the interests of the aboriginal nations of Saskatchewan, and materials that better reflect Saskatchewan's particular economic and geographic make-up in our new WEST Manual, we also found it necessary to include more materials on womens' issues. We are also including more practical materials on techniques for facilitating groups and for assisting participants in the development of their own curriculum materials. Because we are still involved in rewriting the BEST Manual to reflect our own interests we are unable at this time to offer a complete report on its progress. We hope to have the new WEST Manual completed by the end of August, 1991. The Saskatchewan Department of Labour has already agreed to reproduce the binders on our behalf.

The SFL's Program is based on curriculum materials that are created and developed by its participants in the course of their learning. As has already been demonstrated, all of our Pilot Project Course Leaders experienced considerable difficulty in directing their participants to take such an active approach to their own learning processes. Most of us grew up in educational institutions where curriculum and learning directives were handed down - we were told what we would learn and how we would learn it. The transition to an actively participant centered, directed, and controlled learning approach is not an easy one for any of the participants, including the Course Leaders. We believe that a collection of workplace and union based adult curriculum materials, that were created and used by previous participants, could greatly ease this transition. Just being able to see that others in the same predicament were able to rise to the task seems to act as a great motivator and self-confidence builder for all concerned.

The fact that the transition to an actively participant centered learning model is a difficult one did not lead us to question the whole approach. Rather, we have simply recognized the need to try and make the transition an easier one. Although the transition is not an easy one, it is a pivotal one, for once the transition is made the results are amazing. Not only is the progress in learning new skills hastened, but possibly even more importantly, participants' self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning in general are greatly heightened.

7.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

While we continued to meet with employers and union representatives who expressed interest in the WEST Program, to maintain and strengthen our relationship with the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, and to contribute to provincial publications dealing with the issue of workforce literacy, our community outreach activities for the final quarter of the Pilot Project took a new turn.

As we discovered early in our Pilot Project, the SFL's WEST Program does not, nor should it, fulfill all the educational needs of its participants. Many of the participants in our Pilot Project have completion of their GED, trade school, or a University degree as their educational aspiration. Many others are still unaware of the educational opportunities available to them. Their entry or re-entry to whatever educational institution they desire could be greatly facilitated by the development of a contact network. The SFL could build a listing of resource people that would serve as our link with Saskatchewan's Regional Colleges, SIAST, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Gabriel Dumont, the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan and other provincial education organizations and institutions.

These resource people could, as guest speakers, visit WEST classes interested in finding out more information on the educational opportunities available to them. They could act as the first contact for individuals wishing to register in other classes. Possibly they could even act as a contact for bringing other education programs out to the workplace. Such a strategy would not only offer WEST Program participants further educational opportunities, but could also play a key role in reducing many participants' fear of returning to the education system.

The partnerships developed and built here could also provide the ideal environment for sharing the WEST Program model. Such organizations' adoption of the model would provide further opportunities for cooperation and growth. The SFL could go on to operate cooperative programs with Regional Colleges in small rural communities where union membership is not large enough to justify an independent program, or with the SIFC in isolated Northern communities. Those organizations interested in borrowing the model could also go on to deliver their own independent programs in non-union workplaces or on Reserves.

With these endless possibilities in mind we began, with the assistance and cooperation of SGEU staff and SGEU education sector representatives, to conduct a series of meetings with SGEU members from SIAST, Gabriel Dumont, and the Regional Colleges. We have also made initial contacts with representatives from the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan and strengthened our existing relationship with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. We hope these meetings will provide a solid foundation for building future partnerships with all these organizations and institutions.

8.0 LONG TERM FUNDING

We had hoped that the results of this Pilot Project would provide a basis for cementing a partnership between the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the provincial government, and the business community. With the success of our Pilot Project we have built a strengthened and solidified relationship with the Saskatchewan business community. However, with the exception of the productive partnership we have built with the Saskatchewan Department of Labour, we still have not secured the cooperation or support of the provincial government. Our last proposal to the Saskatchewan Department of Education met with an official rejection and a referral back to the Secretary of State.

Although we still hope that the results of this Pilot Project will provide the provincial government with a sound reason for reconsidering their previous decision, we have gone ahead and applied to fifteen various foundations with the aim of being able to at least furnish partial financial support for the WEST Program. The following foundations have received copies of the WEST Program Proposal, information packages on the Program, and letters requesting some form of long-term financial assistance:

Carthy Foundation
Dominion Securities Foundation
Friggstad Foundation
The Henry White Kinnear Foundation
Marantha Foundation
The Maytree Foundation
The Gladys and Merrill Muttart Foundation
Douglas-Coldwell Foundation
Eldee Foundation
Gelmont Foundation
The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
R. Howard Webster Foundation
The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
The Senator Norman M. Paterson Foundation
The Saskatchewan Literacy Foundation

Although we have already received a few rejections from some of the above foundations we still have not received any reply from most of them. We are hopeful that at least a couple of these foundations will provide at least some funding for the WEST Program. We are also continuing our search for additional funding sources.

9.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion we would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to all those whose cooperation, support, assistance, dedication and hard work made the SFL's WEST Pilot Project such a success. Without the contributions of all these individuals and organizations there would not be a WEST Program to be struggling for funding for. Unfortunately, and fortunately, our friends and partners have become too numerous to name all of them without risking ommision.

We must, however, personally extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Secretary of State; in particular to our friend and sister there, Brigid Hayes, without whose support, patience and guidance we would not even have been able to submit our Pilot Project Proposal.

And finally, we offer our special thanks, and continued friendship and solidarity to those individuals whose contributions, dedication, perseverance and faith exceeded even our wildest expectations . . .

. . . the WEST Pilot Project Course Leaders . . .

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Mike Singleton
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